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INFO RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN 7422
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DEPARTMENT FOR INL/C, INL/LP (BOZZOLO) AND WHA/CAR (BUDDEN)

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SUBJECT: JAMAICAN CRIME UPDATE

REF: A)KINGSTON 69 AND B)KINGSTON 71

1.(U) Summary: This is an action message. See paragraphs 10 and 12. The GOJ has made specific requests for USG assistance in tackling on-going efforts to quell violent crime. In January, a surge in violence shocked the Jamaican public and prompted the Commissioner of Police to warn of worse to come during months leading up to national elections this year. But, after an initial spate of violence, things appeared to cool off by the middle of February. The GOJ refined its anti-crime strategy. As the epicenter of violent crime seemed to have shifted from Kingston to Montego Bay, law enforcement operations focused on Montego Bay. End summary.

CRIME FIGURES

2.(U) According to figures supplied by Deputy Police Commissioner Mark Shields, the number of persons arrested and charged for criminal offenses in Jamaica between January 1st and February 18th was 1,894 in 2007, compared to 2,338 for the same period in 2006. However, murders committed during this period increased by 21% nation wide in 2007. While the greater Kingston area was at the same number of murders as last year (125), St. James Parish (Montego Bay) went from 18 murders for the period in 2006 to 31 in 2007, a 72% increase. Clarendon (a marijuana trafficking center) registered an increase of 111%, going from 9 murders in this period in 2006 to 19 in 2007. So far this year, six police officials were murdered. Comment: Murders overall in Jamaica decreased by 20% last year, compared to 2005. End Comment.

ANTI-CRIME STRATEGY

3.(U) On January 22, cabinet reportedly endorsed an anti-crime strategy put forth by Minister of National Security Peter Phillips. Phillips made the strategy public on January 29. He emphasized that it was not a new strategy; rather it was a plan for "staying the course." Basically, that meant applying what worked in Kingston elsewhere. It included the following:

- applying hot-spot policing (intense focus of resources) to trouble areas any where in Jamaica
- conducting joint operations using the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) and the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF)
- establishing a permanent presence of Operation Kingfish on the Western end of the island
- expanding the Major Investigations Task Force to Western Jamaica

4.(U) But, Phillips did call for some new initiatives, as well. They were

- new legislation to allow DNA evidence to be collected from accused persons
- enactment of the Proceeds of Crime Act before the end of February
- legislation to provide stiffer penalties for persons trafficking in firearms
- legislation to establish a National Investigative Authority to deal with investigations of corruption in all areas of public life
- deploying marine vessels around the island and establishing three permanent marine police bases on the south coast to deal with arms smuggling
- a major recruitment drive to increase numbers and quality of JCF staff
- review the Police Service Regulations and the Book of Rules to expand legal powers to remove tainted JCF members
- strengthen operation of the newly created Police Civilian Oversight Authority and the anti-corruption unit within the JCF's Professional Standards Branch
- Upgrade technologies available to the JCF, including the police radio system and the 119 emergency hotline

5.(U) Following the Minister's lead, Commissioner of Police Lucius Thomas gave an address on January 31, in which he elaborated on plans to gain control over criminal elements. In addition to measures indicated above, Thomas said he wanted to target known criminals, using intelligence and surveillance to get the evidence needed to arrest and prosecute them. The Commissioner said government needs to formally establish a Source Management Fund and System, which would permit the JCF to pay informants. After initial GOJ funding, subsequent monies would come from the forfeitures under the Proceeds of Crime Act.

6.(U) Thomas also wanted the following:

- Better monitoring of the highways (more ad hoc check stops)
- Automated license plate reading technology and closed circuit television systems
- Revamp the Witness Support Unit
- Merge the Canine Division into the Narcotics Division
- Strengthen the Organized Crime Investigative Division to include financial crimes in collaboration with the Financial Investigation Unit
- Create an islandwide electronic criminal database
- Improve the police recruitment process to include mandatory drug testing of new recruits
- Change the law to give Commissioners the authority to dismiss police officers, who after due process, have been found guilty or have lost the confidence of the "organization"
- Hire an International Police Officer (IPO) to the Anti-Corruption Division
- Increase marijuana eradication and interdiction to attack the "guns for ganja" trade

7.(SBU) Comments: The anti-crime strategy is ambitious and comprehensive. Much of what the Minister and Commissioner want will depend on additional funds from the GOJ. Phillips is negotiating his budget with the Minister of Finance. The strategy contains several elements that we urged the GOJ to adopt early in January (reftel B). These include hiring the International Police Officer, gaining control over the problem of corruption within the JCF, and enactment of the Proceeds of Crime Act. The Proceeds of Crime Act was passed February 23. On February 27, the Acting NAS Director (NASDIR) was informed that the ten applicants for the anti-corruption IPO position had been short listed to three, all British nationals. Pending availability of the selected candidate, this person could be on board by April. End Comment.

SECURITY FORCES FOCUS ON MONTEGO BAY

8.(U) Joint JCF/JDF forces immediately began the attack on criminal elements in the Montego Bay area. Most of the murders were blamed on rival criminals wanting a larger piece of the pie of illicit funds being bilked out of Americans who

are being victimized by the so called "lottery scammers." Jamaicans contact mostly elderly Americans and tell them they have won the Jamaican lottery. However, money is needed to process their winnings. Not all the details are available yet about these activities.

9.(U) On February 15, police detained 32 people for questioning regarding their links to the lottery scam. Of that number five were recently formally charged, including the so-called mastermind, who was a former PNP Youth Organizer. Law enforcement operations are being coordinated by Kingfish. Kingfish brings together intelligence, surveillance, investigations and enforcement operations. It was reported that the scam was facilitated by employees in the information communication technology (ICT) sector in Montego Bay. Some ICT employees worked with local criminals by providing them with data on American clients which is then exploited in the scam. These locals are linked to the notorious Stone Crusher Gang, which may provide the muscle to settle disputes among the scam artists. It is likely that before the operation ends, the Stone Crusher Gang will itself be crushed. They are linked with a number of violent crimes in the Montego Bay area, not just the lottery scam. Another tactic the JCF is applying is community policing tactics learned from the Grant's Pen project in Kingston.

10. (SBU) On February 26, NASDIR met with Chief Technical Director of the Financial Investigations Division Christine Chambers and Alwyn Herriman, Principal Director of Financial Crimes Unit. They explained that they have been working behind the scenes in the above mentioned operation. They have acquired considerable information about persons in the U.S. who are potential witnesses, as well as the identities of people who are providing personal data on potential American victims of the scam. The GOJ officials made a plea for the embassy to try to get an official from the U.S. Secret Service to come to Jamaica for a few days to advise

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them with regard to the U.S. links in the scam. The embassy supports their request and has asked INL to coordinate contact with the Secret Service.

GUNS FOR GANJA (MARIJUANA) -- OR IS IT MEAT?

11.(U) For many years, the GOJ has attempted to stem the influx of illegal firearms to the island. Uncontrolled availability of arms was historically linked to increasing levels of violent crime. During an election year, unregulated access to firearms takes on the added concern that election results will be influenced by the actions of politically affiliated criminal bosses. That explains why the GOJ is taking a more pro-active approach to reducing availability of illegal arms. At present, the GOJ sees the biggest threat coming from the "guns for ganja" trade, whereby Jamaican marijuana is traded/sold for guns coming from Haiti and Central America. A number of JCF/JDF operations have been directed against the trade this year. In one such operation (conducted by Kingfish) early this month, eleven persons, including three Haitians and one Honduran, were arrested. Following that operation, a Kingfish spokesman was quoted in the press saying that they would be targeting Jamaicans operating legitimate businesses who are employing fisherman to transport the guns and marijuana. In a separate incident, on February 5, a policeman was killed in a shoot out in Spanish Town. It was discovered that the gunman shot him with a .380 pistol marked Police Nationale DeHaiti. Jamaica's National Intelligence Bureau was tasked with tracing the gun through INTERPOL.

12.(SBU) In a related move, the GOJ intensified its efforts to seize large marijuana shipments. By the end of January, the GOJ had seized 12,348 pounds of compressed marijuana, compared to 2608 pounds in January 2006. The GOJ also wants to be more aggressive in eradicating marijuana. The Minister of National Security has asked if the USG can assist by providing a helicopter lift support to transport JDF and JCF eradication teams to the growing sites. The Ministry is

prepared to schedule such an operation at a time when the U.S. has suitable assets available. The JDF lacks personnel transport helicopters for such an undertaking and currently seems to be experiencing a shortage of fuel. The embassy requests that SOUTHCOM consider the request and provide a response that we can pass to the Minister.

13.(U) Haitian involvement now appears to extend to ganja farming in Jamaica. A story published 25 February in The Gleaner tells of an undercover reporter who visited a ganja farm. He saw the usual things -- nursery, drying sheds, and fields under cultivation. The farm employed 36 workers. Of these, 19 were Haitians, who reportedly were more productive than the Jamaican laborers. The activity was well funded, with a Jamaican in Haiti to keep an eye on operations there and one Haitian on the farm for the same purpose.

14.(U) Recently, Operation Kingfish announced that intelligence suggests that there is also a thriving trade in cattle carcasses for guns. This activity is reportedly behind the uQing in cattle stealing in the parishes of St. Elizabeth and Manchester. To date, however, no smuggler in possession of cattle carcasses has been caught.

ELECTION YEAR VIOLENCE

15.(SBU) By the end of February, fear of politically-motivated violence had abated. On February 20, NASDIR asked Mark Shields if he had engaged in any further negotiations to resolve violent disputes among politically-affiliated criminal leaders. He said that, since his January intervention in the Mountain View area of Kingston (reported in Kingston 110), there had been no further problems requiring that action. Shields cautioned, however, that he may have to engage in negotiations in Kingston's Grants Pen area. There is a problem between upper and lower Grants Pen. Comment: Conflict resolution in Mt. View involved Minister Phillip Paulwell and Danhai Williams. Shields advised that he has employed this tactic several times since 2005. Grant's Pen is the site of the USAID community policing project. End Comment.

CONCLUSION

16.(SBU) In a poll earlier this year, Jamaicans identified crime as their number one concern. In an election-year, both major political parties are fully aware of the importance of attacking the problem. Minister Phillips may also see tackling the roots of the crime problem as part of the legacy he wants to leave should his tenure as Minister of National Security end, following elections. In any case, the GOJ is attacking the problem more vigorously than in the past. A variety of international law enforcement opportunities present themselves in this changed environment. Now that the GOJ recognizes that marijuana cultivation is closely linked to political stability, it is prepared to act more comprehensively than in the past when a few trucks took crews with brush cutters to limited ganja-growing sites. However, the GOJ appears to lack the resources to do so on its own.

17.(SBU) The crime situation in Montego Bay is serious enough that the Peace Corps is considering pulling some of its volunteers out of that area. Having made great gains through community policing in Grant's Pen, USAID is particularly concerned about prospects for violence in Grant's Pen. USAID plans to extend community policing techniques to other locals in Jamaica, including the Montego Bay area. They are planning a conference in Montego Bay which will draw attention to the threat that crime and violence pose to democracy and sustainable development. The conference (scheduled for March 28 and 29) is titled, "Guns, Ganja and Governance: A Local Problem With a Regional Dimension."

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